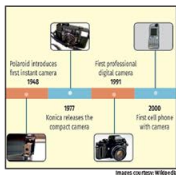


The Big Bang of Photography

We were in the 1940s in part 1 of this article (ref: *Dysti* July 2020). 35 mm films had just become known and their usage was starting to get prevalent among photographers and photojournalists covering the world war II. Sir Henri Cartier-Bresson's style of capturing decisive moments was getting adopted profusely. Well, let's see what happened next. How did the cameras evolve? How about another walk in the lanes of history?

Leica, a popular camera brand name, had commercialized their first 35 mm cameras after WWI. Having test marked their design between 1923-24 and receiving positive feedback, this camera went into production in 1925 as the 'Leica I' and increased Leica's popularity. This also cemented the position of 35 mm as the format of choice for high-end compact cameras – a definite milestone.

In the 1930s, many experimentations came about. Kodak hit the market with the affordable 'Retina I' in 1934 and the 135 cartridges (better known as the 35 mm photographic film) used for still photography. Yet, the 35 mm cameras were out of reach for most people. This is when Argus introduced the cost-effective 'Argus A' in 1936 going on to make their immensely popular model, 'Argus C3', in 1939.



Abracadabra

Inventions don't need to follow a conventional pattern. Because, if they did, we would never have witnessed the sense of wonder on people's faces seeing their photos being printed instantly!

I am talking about the Polaroid debuting its commercial instant photo camera called the 'Model 95 Land camera' in 1948. Its USP was that it used a patented secret chemical process to develop the film inside

the camera in 'less than a minute' and gave a printed photo. This was Magic: "Click the Photo – Abracadabra – and lo! the printed image was ready". The novelty of instant pictures captivated the public's attention. But Polaroid stopped making their instant films in 2008 and took away their secrets with them. None could replicate the quality that was found in a Polaroid, though several attempted to revive instant film.

The Next Level

The French introduced the permanent image, but the Japanese brought easier image control to the photographer. In 1950s, two Japanese companies Asahi (later became Pentax) and Nikon took photography to the next level by introducing the 'Asahiflex' and 'Nikon F' cameras, which were both single lens reflex (SLR) type cameras; which remains the widely used equipment for photography to this day.

A few notable revolutions in the times leading up to the 1950s include the 'Twin Lens Reflex', the Franke & Heidecke Rollei flex medium format TLR in 1928, the compact SLR 'Ihagee Exakta' in 1933 and the most known of the 35 mm TLR - the 'Contaflex SLR' by Zeiss Ikon of 1935. These however, had little success.

The Birth of the SLR

Asahi and Nikon soon had competitors in the field of SLRs. Camera makers Canon and Yashica entered the domain in 1950s. The science behind the SLR camera is that the photographer sees exactly what will be recorded onto the image medium, since these cameras used a pentaprism and a movable mirror behind the lens, which reflect the image in the lens on to the viewfinder.

Photography had started to capture the world's eye and the timing for the introduction of the SLR camera was perfect. From here on, SLR-style cameras remained the camera of choice for the next 30 years. Many improvements came out, to both the cameras and the film, during this time.

Cameras Got Smart

Technology advanced and the 'Smart cameras' (point-and-shoot) emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s. These were compact and lightweight cameras capable of making image control decisions on their own. 'C35 Jasupin' was the first point-and-

shoot camera released by Konica, in 1977. These automatic cameras could calculate the shutter speed, aperture and focus, allowing the photographers to concentrate on compositions. This made photography available to everyone, including children.

The casual photographers liked the smart automatic cameras, but the serious amateurs and professionals still preferred to make their own choices for image control and adjustments using SLR cameras.

The Digital Age

Think of images being stored electronically instead of on films? These were made possible in the 1980s and 1990s by various manufacturers, when point-and-shoot cameras were invented that used a 'digital medium' for recording. Come 1991, Kodak produced the first digital camera that was so advanced that professionals successfully used it. Other players, such as Nikon, Canon and Pentax followed suit. Nikon released the Nikon F3, the first commercially available DSLR in 1991.

From this point, the digital camera manufacturers advanced their technology even further, finally arriving at the cameras that we have today, the advanced DSLRs (Digital Single Lens Reflex) with plenty of models and features to choose from.

In the mid-'90s, mobile phones were catching up. They became smaller, smarter and sophisticated. This led to the invention of 'Smartphone cameras'. The world was taken by surprise to see the first camera phone to hit the market, Kyocera's VP-210 in Japan around 1997. It recorded 20 still photos and video at a 2fps rate.

Apple caught up and released their first iPhone in 1997. Rest is history, as we all know. The iPhone, since then took over the market, transforming casual photography, media, visual communication and finally, human behaviour forever.

In conclusion, the path that photography has taken from the days of inception is a mind-blowing story. These days, almost every human being on earth has a role to play in creating a precious photograph.



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